

## HR Weekly Podcast

02/29/08

Today is February 29, 2008, and welcome to the HR Weekly Podcast from the State Office of Human Resources. This week's topic concerns the role of wikis and communication in the workplace.

As many of you are probably aware, a wiki is a type of website specifically designed for collaboration. Really Simple Syndication, or RSS, allows web-feed formats to be published and updated frequently allowing readers immediate real-time access. Contrary to a traditional web site, wikis allow visitors who do not know HTML or any other coding language to edit, update, and add pages to the wiki. Wikipedia, found on the internet at [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org), is probably the most well-known example of using wiki software in a project allowing people from around the world to collaboratively write and edit an online encyclopedia. Wikis, along with popular social networking sites and blogs, are known as Web 2.0 or the second generation of internet technologies.

Wikis can also benefit the human resources function and improve the workplace. Communication between HR managers and employees can be revolutionized while simultaneously responding to the needs of Generation Y. Using wikis and social media can help manage employees in remote locations, letting managers provide real-time direction and supervision. An HR manager can publish information to employees promptly and allow them to respond rather than emailing policy or sensitive material to ten or more recipients. Wikis allow for this information to be published and available instantly. The ability to create and update information quickly is also ideal for knowledge transfer. When tenured employees leave the workforce, many times their expert knowledge leaves as well. Wikis can be used to help capture that knowledge serving as a platform for senior employees to transfer knowledge to new hires. Many companies have designated wikis for this very use of knowledge transfer because wikis can be shared and stored over secure, password protected servers to which only internal employees have access.

Wikis can also make staffing strategy and the on-boarding process easier for HR managers. Providing a one-stop shop for new hires to access and comment on work materials through use of a wiki gives employees control and choice over how they learn. Employers benefit because it applies high security to content, limits information exchange among authorized personnel, and provides a full audit trail all while the business becomes more efficient.

Perhaps the biggest benefit that wikis provide is enabling quicker collaboration, essentially creating a 'flat' organization. Instead of using email to coordinate two people, wikis can be used to coordinate ten different people with ten different ideas and perspectives. Internal wikis provide simple, fast, widespread information sharing and encourage a sense of community. Projects are made easier because ideas are shared seamlessly and everyone has access to the same information at all times.

Today HR professionals are using wikis to do everything from providing templates for memos and reports to replacing knowledge bases and frequently asked questions, or FAQs. Wikis can be used to create an interactive employee handbook that is up to date and permits employees to post questions that could be answered within seconds. Minutes from meetings can also be stored on wikis enabling employees to have dialogue and ask questions after a meeting is over. For example, at IBM, a wiki meeting intended for brainstorming lasted for three days with online discussion from more than 100,000 people from countries all over the world.

OHR currently uses a wiki in its Advanced Supervision course. Participants use the wiki to post their improvement goal for the course and to share ideas, feedback, and experiences. The use of a wiki facilitates learning and sharing of experiences with one another to improve the training experience. The ultimate goal of this OHR wiki is for this group to continue to collaborate with one another even after the course so that continuous learning takes place through the exchange of new information, ideas, and experiences.

If you have any questions about this issue, please call your HR Consultant at 737-0900.

Thank you.